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FM AMEMBASSY ULAANBAATAR
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 1936
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UNCLAS ULAANBAATAR 000097

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STATE FOR EAP/CM

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: PHUM KWMN PGOV SOCI MG

SUBJECT: CONSTITUTIONAL COURT REFUSES TO HEAR COMPLAINT OVER WOMEN-CANDIDATES QUOTA

REF: ULAANBAATAR 0003

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¶1. (U) SUMMARY: Mongolia's Constitutional Court has declined to hear a complaint over Parliament's controversial elimination of a requirement that at least 30 percent of any party's candidates for national elections be women. A court official communicated this decision on February 19 to J.Zanna, who had filed the request on behalf of a number of women's rights organizations. The National Network of Mongolian Women's NGOs said it would protest the court's decision by carrying out a nationwide signature drive between March 6 and 8, under the theme, "equal participation, fair representation, responsible politics." Separately, a group of women led by psychologist B.Saranchimeg announced on February 21 that it was seeking to register a new political party - the Women's Party - with the Supreme Court, ahead of June 29 Parliamentary elections. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (U) Mongolia's Constitutional Court has refused to hear a complaint over Parliament's December 26, 2007 scrapping of a requirement that at least 30 percent of any party's candidates for national elections be women. A court official conveyed the decision on February 19 to J.Zanna, who had filed the request January 31 on behalf of a number of women's rights groups. The complaint argued that in eliminating the quota (reftel), Parliament violated several constitutional provisions and principles. Zanna did not make clear whether she would exercise her right to appeal the court's decision.

¶3. (U) The National Network of Mongolian Women's NGOs (MonFemNet) said that in protest against the court's decision, it would carry out a nationwide signature campaign between March 6 and 8, under the theme, "equal participation, fair representation, responsible politics." In Ulaanbaatar, the group said, the campaign will be centered at Sukhbaatar Square, where an audacious protest in late 1989 set the country on a path toward democracy.

¶4. (U) At a recent MonFemNet event that brought together women's activists from nine provinces, activists issued a statement which said that the scrapping of the quota "was dictated by the desire of incumbent male Parliamentarians to hold on to their political power at all costs."

¶5. (U) A group of women led by psychologist B.Saranchimeg announced on February 21 that it was seeking to register a new political party - the Women's Party - with the Supreme Court, ahead of the June 29

Parliamentary elections. The group said its effort is aimed at correcting "social defects." It said the party hoped to field three to five candidates in the elections, and that it had no plans to form a coalition with any existing, registered party.

¶6. (U) Women currently hold five of the 76 seats in Parliament; three of the 16 Cabinet positions; and seven of the 17 seats on the Supreme Court.

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